

Anne K. Block

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Anne Katherine Block (born 1967) is an American political activist, lawyer and blogger. Block self-publishes a controversial news tabloid^[1] dedicated to outing what she sees as corruption in local government. Block has gained increasing regional notoriety for her practice of using open government law to bury local governments under unmanageable amounts of public records requests. Block sees the Public Records Act as part of her crusade against corruption, and she uses her website to make embarrassing claims against officials - in one case posting information relating to an elected official's supposed Sexually Transmitted Disease. Block, a Washington State Bar member, often buries her targeted public officials under a stream of legal actions, appeals and recall attempts, all of which she is free to withdraw, postpone or walk away from at no cost. None of Block's motions have succeeded to date, but Block's hometown recently filed court papers stating that because of the expenses incurred by Block's motions and requests, the City was unable to provide snowplowing and other basic services. In addition to her interest in open records law, Block has filed at least nine recall attempts targeting elected officials over the last two years. Most recently, Block filed three successive recall attempts targeting Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon. To date, none of Block's legal motions or recall attempts have been successful.^[2]^[3]

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Personal Life, Activism and Reporting

Block describes herself as a political activist motivated by open government. Block is often critical of local elected officials, using her website and social media (See: @goldbarreporters/twitter) as platforms to release records, critique officials and to publicize her legal actions. Block has compared herself to Martin Luther King and Susan B. Anthony.^[4] Block moved to Gold Bar, WA in 2005. After attending several Gold Bar City Council meetings, Block launched a local online news site dedicated to outing "corruption" at Gold Bar City Hall and throughout the Snohomish County area.^[5] Block was admitted to the Washington State Bar Association on July 10, 2006. Her WSBA license number is 37640, and her areas of practice are listed as "Constitutional, Disability, Employment, Government, Workers' Compensation". As of August 2012, Block has not faced any WSBA discipline regarding the Rules of Professional Conduct. Block currently operates a small law firm in Monroe, Washington specializing in "sick energy worker" government discrimination litigation.^[6]^[7]

Attempted Recall of Aaron Reardon

In 2012, Block filed at least two unsuccessful recall petitions targeting Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon. The first petition was tossed out of court on August 9 in Skagit County following a change of venue from Snohomish County. Skagit County Superior Court Judge John Meyer ruled that the recall petition was fatally flawed as Block failed to attest under oath to the accuracy of her allegations against Reardon.^[8] Block refiled in Snohomish County after properly signing and attesting her petition. On August 28, Block withdrew her petition citing personal scheduling conflicts. Block told Snohomish County Prosecutors that she planned to file a third recall petition upon her return.^[9]

City of Gold Bar Disputes

According to a February 2012 Seattle Times investigative report, Block's repeated requests and legal actions have greatly impacted local government. The Times estimates that Block's multiple records requests tied up nearly one-fifth of Gold Bar's budget. The City of Gold Bar filed court documents indicating that Block's requests comprised over 90 percent of the total requests received since 2006 and that the City was unable to provide winter road maintenance and snowplowing services because of the cost of Block's requests. In addition, Block's repeated requests for personal records and her subsequent publishing of said records on her website led directly to the resignation of several City employees, including the clerk charged with responding to Block's requests.^[2]^[10]

Block's Gold Bar activism began in 2006 after Block confronted then-Mayor Crystal Hill regarding Hill's practice of occasionally bringing her children to City Council meetings. Block emailed Hill and told her to get a babysitter. Block followed the initial email with a Public Records Act request for all of Hill's emails. Block then re-published the emails and also published postings accusing Hill of numerous misdeeds, including extortion, affairs, and hiding of public records. Block also disclosed information relating to Hill's medical conditions. In a September 2009 posting, Block stated the following: "For years, people like Crystal Hill ... have controlled and manipulated Gold Bar residents and local politics. But with an activist attorney in Gold Bar, along with a new online newspaper, those days are numbered." Hill resigned in 2009 citing Block's "harassment". Hill has stated that the harassment followed her to her new position, where her employer received anonymous tips accusing Hill of drug use, sale of narcotics and having an affair with an employee.^[2]

The City estimates that nearly 20 percent of its discretionary budget is used as a result of Block's requests and legal maneuvers, including the defense of local officials whom Block has repeatedly attempted to recall.^[11] In January of 2012, eight of ten pending action items on the Gold Bar City Council agenda were lawsuits filed by Block or her site's credited contributors.^[2]

Other Legal Actions

Block has been party to numerous personal legal actions in both Massachusetts and Washington State.

- Block attempted to sue the United States Department of Labor alleging that her 2007 termination from the federal Office of Worker's Compensation Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program amounted to a violation of her civil rights.^[12] Block alleged that she was discriminated against based on a disability and that she was retaliated against. United States District Attorney Jenny Durkin represented the federal government, and successfully argued that evidence, which included the declarations of five co-workers and a supervisor, showed "overwhelmingly" that Block was fired for poor job performance.^[13] The suit was summarily dismissed for lack of cause on May 20, 2010.^[14]
- Block filed for Federal bankruptcy protection in 1998, receiving a full discharge from her accumulated personal debts.^[15]
- In December 2011, Block was ordered to pay legal expenses to the City of Gold Bar as a result of her multiple delays and withdrawn mootions relating to her ultimately unsuccessful recall petitions targeting Gold Bar officials.^[16]

Controversies, Conspiracies and Criticisms

Publishing of Defamatory Materials

The accuracy of Block's reporting has been called into question by the subjects of her writing and targets of her legal actions - the Seattle Times described the content of her stories as a either "true, partly true or exaggerations".^[6] Block has made numerous false or unsourced accusations with regard to local officials and targets of her legal actions:

- Block published unconfirmed information detailing a local official's alleged medical history, including references to a supposed sexually transmitted disease.^[17]
- Block tweeted that a former official was suffering from mental illness and anger management issues.^[18]
- Block has alleged that Snohomish County Superior Court Judge Thomas Wynne accepted bribes in relation to one or more of Block's failed recall efforts.^[19]
- Block's site refers to Gold Bar Councilman Christopher Wright as "a deviant criminal, wife beater and liar."^[2]
- Block states that her enemies, including reporters,^[20] elected officials, prosecutors and the judiciary are either colluding against her, accepting bribes, or both.^[19]

Professional Legal Conduct

Block has cited numerous excuses for why she cannot attend or failed to complete compulsory portions of legal documentation necessary for her various court dates. Block has claimed supposed death threats, personal disabilities, personal scheduling conflicts, personal health issues and more as reasons why she cannot appear at the regularly scheduled date for motions she filed herself.^[21]^[22]

- Twice, Block published reports of death threats on her site or via social networking, and then subsequently failed to appear or withdrew pending motions - only to refile at a later date. Block has not sourced or given specific details regarding the supposed death threats, which has led local officials to opine in court documents that Block uses the threats as a method for delaying and causing additional expense for her opponents, as they must prepare for each scheduled hearing as if it will occur. On at least one occasion, a Superior Court Judge has dismissed Block's death threat claims and refused to reschedule or grant Block special accommodation, citing the fact that Block provided no evidence to support her serious claims.^[23]

"Although the reason given was death threat, no details were given as to the content or detail of that threat. I did take into account that the Court has more than usual security available. In fact, we have a marshall here at all times in court. Further, I thought it was more appropriate for an argument to occur in person." - from Snohomish County Superior Court Judge's Oral Decision 12/11/11, p. 24)

- In August, Block's recall petition targeting Aaron Reardon was tossed out of court after it was revealed that she had not attested her allegations under oath, meaning she had not signed her motion. Because she failed to appear for the hearing, the petition was tossed out of court. Block refiled the next day, and the five-step recall process began again.^[24]
- Block withdrew her second Aaron Reardon recall petition nearly a month later, pulling her motions on the day of the hearing, citing personal scheduling conflicts and stating an intent to file the petition a third time upon her return.^[25]
- Block's specific legal accusations against officials have been refuted and called into question by the court on multiple occasions. Snohomish County Justice Thomas Wynne on the the accuracy of Block's multiple claims relating to her recalls against local officials:

"None of Block's exhibits are authenticated in any fashion.... (Block) does not even provide anything to attest to the authenticity of her claims...None of the documents have been authenticated....Block offers no facts to support her claims...exhibits cited don't support her claims at all...Is this charge some sort of typographical error? I don't know what law is meant (to have been broken) here....There is no factual basis (to Block's claims) and no information provided to support any of it.^[26]

Supposed Death Threats

On at least two occasions, Block has publicly claimed that she is the victim of death threats relating to her legal actions and reporting.^[27] In one instance, she told the Seattle Times that she had recieved a death threat but then amended her story, clarifying that someone had thrown a "half-full can of Miller" onto her yard.

- "I've had death threats. I've had beer bottles thrown on my front lawn."*

Actually, Block later clarified, it was a half-filled can of Miller, Seattle Times 2/5/12. To date, Block has not reported any supposed death threats to law enforcement, nor has she provided any evidence of said threats.^[28]

Claims of Government Surveillance

Block told the Times that she has proof that someone put a tracking device on her car (*"I wonder when I turn the key to my car one day whether it's going to blow up."*) (Seattle Times 2/5/12) Block claims to have pictures of devices used to monitor her, and claims to have received personal threats as recently as August 2012. Block told the Seattle Times that she felt her phones were tapped.^[29]^[2]

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- ↑ Noah Haglund (13 August 2012). "Gold Bar Woman Refiles Petition" ↗ *Daily Herald of Snohomish County*. Retrieved 22 August 2012. "The county received the reworked petition Friday, a day after a Superior Court judge dismissed a nearly identical recall pettion from attorney Anne Block, who also maintains a political blog."
- ↑ *Emily Heffter* (5 February 2012). "Activist's website hammers away at Gold Bar, costs tiny town money" ↗ *Seattle Times*. Retrieved 21 August 2012. "What motivates us? Basically, in a nutshell, it's open government and the idea that a handful of people can effectively make change, just like Martin Luther King and Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony," Block said."
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